



In this issue, we continue to feature themes on Christology. The first is a synopsis of a thesis presented by an alumnus last summer on the imaginative and symbolic genius of Ephrem the Syrian whose Christological hymns express tenets of orthodoxy to become inspiration of worship and poetic spirituality. Jesus Christ is also the object of doxologies according to Melito; and a student expresses her interest on his only surviving work *On Pascha* since its rediscovery in 1932.



**“Chasm, Bridge, and Response: Ephrem the Syrian’s View on the Human Approach and Attitude Towards God as Seen in his Hymns on Faith.”**

- Charis Vleugels

*My interest in Ephrem the Syrian began when I was reflecting on the transcendence of God, a divine attribute about which he has much to say in a balanced way. His reticence to define the Most High in human systems, combined with his reverence for God’s choice to reveal Himself in human words and ways, caught my attention. This poet-theologian has lived and died in passion for His Lord, and I wanted to learn of his writings.*

The purpose of my thesis was to unfold Ephrem’s view on the human approach of God as seen in his Hymns on Faith. In the HdF of Ephrem the Syrian, a fearful Chasm is depicted between the Creator and the created. This chasm proves to be reflected in the limits of the human senses as well as in humanity’s sinfulness and mortality (ch. 1). Although this immense gap appeared to be uncrossable, God radically bridged it in His abundant mercy towards us by means of creation, Scripture, and Christ (ch. 2). The human response of neglecting the chasm hopelessly increases its width instead of crossing it. A humble awareness of the chasm and the human limits, however, increases our awe towards the magnificence of

the Most High, and cautions us in our approach towards Him (ch. 3). One’s attitude proves to be fundamental in the reaction to God’s bridge. The stance of either pride or dependence with reference to God’s self-revelation reflects one’s real motivation in the approach towards Him. The consequence of either a blind way which leads to death, or true Life in God’s presence, is the necessary outcome of this attitude, according to Ephrem’s HdF. But even at the final balance, God’s love and grace are manifest. We can trust Him if we depend on His divine help.

A helpful website for syriac studies:  
<http://syrcm.cua.edu/Hugoye/index.html>

**Melito of Sardis—a study worth pursuing**

-Elenora Hof

I’m a third year bachelor student in Bible and Theology. I choose this direction because I wanted to be trained in theology proper. I’m greatly interested in both Old and New Testament and Systematic Theology. My interests being diverse, I still didn’t sort out a major. I’ve always been very interested in Bible translation—one of the main reasons for studying at the ETF. I’m planning to do my internship at Wycliffe Bible Translators next September. A year ago I started a blog devoted to Dutch Bible translations. For Dutch speaking members: see [www.nederlandsebijbels.nl](http://www.nederlandsebijbels.nl). Now, in the course ‘New Testament Seminar’ I worked on a paper concerning Melito of Sardes (d. 180 CE), an early Christian bishop and probably author of the intriguing Paschal Homily. I am thankful for the opportunity to continue my research on him and write on Melito in the Early Christian Literature Project. In my paper I focused on the possibility of a relationship between Jewish Christianity and Melito. The subject of Melito is still worth further study, because there’s hardly any scholarly consensus about many aspects of his person and work. In fact, some even hold the view that Melito himself was a Jew. Besides this, worth investing is also his supposed Quartodeciman practice, his frequently debated anti-Judaism and his list of the canon. After all, Melito was considered a great authority by Tertullian

and Jerome, and many works are pseudepigraphically ascribed to him.



**Recommended reading**

For accessible orientation to issues on historiography, oral tradition, criteria of authenticity, canon, Gnostic and apocryphal gospels . . .

- R. Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006)
- D. Bock, *The Missing Gospels: Unearthing the Truth Behind Alternative Christianities* (Nashville: Nelson, 2006)
- E. Komoszewski, Daniel Wallace, and M. James Sawyer, *Reinventing Jesus: What The Da Vinci Code and Other Novel Speculations Don’t Tell You* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2006).
- C. A. Evans, *Fabricating Jesus: How Modern Scholars Distort the Gospels* (Downers Grove, 2006)
- B. Witherington III, *What Have They Done with Jesus?: Beyond Strange Theories and Bad History--Why We Can Trust the Bible* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2006)

**RCEC discussion meetings are open to all (✓ your calendar):**

Mar 15	Apr 19	May 31
Sept 6	Oct 11	Nov 15
Place: Staff Room in Peda		
Time: Thursdays 13:00-14:00		
Please join us with your sac lunch		

RCEC is designed to encourage research in any area in Early Christianity, and therefore inviting any ETF student who may be interested at whatever stage in this area. Publications, lecture presentations, discussion meetings, and other events will unfold as we are building a base for ongoing research among the ETF student body, alumni, and faculty.

- **Business mtgs:**  
14:00-15:00 (May 31, & in Dec - TBA)
- **ECL publication:**  
1) Guidelines for ECL (19.5.07)  
2) Odes Sample (25.5.07)  
3) Jewish Christianity ECL (8.6.07)